



Furry Feng Shui

By Brenda Peisinger

Many of us feel the need to please and communicate with our furry family members, and one way of doing that is to consider our pets when we organize and decorate our homes. When designing an animal-friendly home, Feng Shui principles can create an environment that benefits you and your pet. Feng Shui is an ancient Chinese philosophy in which basic concepts of energy, balance, and connectiveness are used to create an environment that supports your unique intentions.

Feng Shui (pronounced fung schway) is associated with five elements (fire, earth, metal, water, and wood), and each element with its colors, smells, and shapes can be used to create environments according to our intentions. There are some basic Feng Shui concepts we can use to nurture a new puppy or to provide a comfortable and safe environment for our aging friends. We need to use space as a tool, while also remaining cognizant that the colors we choose for bedding, the shapes we use for food dishes, and even the floor and fabric choices in our homes should be intentionally chosen to meet the needs of our pets while contributing to the warmth and loving environment of our homes. Implementing new and exciting elements in a manner that will improve or correct unfavorable conditions in your living space is often simple and inexpensive.

A new puppy in the home brings renewed energy, love, and excitement with all the possibilities life has to offer. They are our “yang” energies, full of life, energy, and playfulness. However, for a dog, being in a new environment can bring fear and insecurities. Our puppies need stability, groundedness, and security. Adding some “yin” in the environment will help balance their energies, especially at bedtime.

According to Feng Shui principles, the Earth element gives one a sense of belonging, permanence, and a feeling of connectedness. When looking for bedding or blankets for a new puppy, rely on the Earth element by incorporating the earth tone colors (brown, yellow, terra cotta, sand tones/gray) with a square pattern. In all your decision making, keep in mind the way dogs see color. Humans see a full spectrum of colors, while studies show that the dog’s world consists of yellows, blues, and grays. Like a human with red-green color blindness, they are unable to tell the difference between red and green. When a human perceives a red object, it appears yellow to the dog.

Crating your new family member is another way to give them a feeling of security or a sense of a “cave.” Whether or not you will be crating, place his/her bedding in a corner away from doors and with as little activity and drafts as possible. There are wonderful “dens” on the market that replicate nature. These den environments provide a feeling of warmth, security, and privacy, while also integrating the life source of nature.

Our older friends need the same consideration when it comes to home design and planning. There are wonderful



It's hip to be square while slowing down the digestion process. Black and blue square bowls designed by a local artist at Lucky Lucy's Canine Cafe, Federal Hill.

products on the market that offer orthopedic beds for aching joints. Like a new puppy, our older friends may at times have "accidents" and choosing bedding with fabrics that prevents moisture, bacteria, and stains from accumulating in the fibers, allows for a more pleasing experience for both humans and pets. Crypton fabric washes

things used to be.

You can also take advantage of your dog's most highly developed sense – the sense of smell – to make them more comfortable in your home. Dogs have about 25 times more olfactory (smell) receptors than humans do. Knowing the characteristics of each smell, and their properties, allows us to consciously use them where they are most needed. As humans, we respond to the pleasant and calming smell of lavender, and know the energetic feeling of sniffing peppermint. This is the same for dogs. To aid "way finding" in your home, use a scent that will call your dog to the action you wish them to take. For instance, using one aroma where your dog's food and water bowl is located, like peppermint or spearmint, can guide them in the right direction when it is time to eat. You might want to use a different aroma leading them toward their elimination area or toward the door, like an earthy or woody scent.

Part of creating a healthy, happy, balanced home for your pets is removing as many toxins as possible from your environment. Take into consideration the Volatile Organic Chemical

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like a dream, and offers freedom in design with little worry about wear and tear.

Failing eyesight can be an issue with our elderly dogs, and the principles of "way finding" (used by hospitals and nursing homes) can be utilized. Our pets cannot read letters, but they understand the difference between a hard surface (wood floor) and a soft surface (carpet). By adding simple elements we can make it easier and less stressful for our pets to find their familiar way to their food, beds, or a comfortable spot on our laps or by our feet. Using runners or carpets that lead to food and elimination areas assists pets in finding their way, with less stress and more accuracy. Remember to use non-skid matting under your carpets or runners. This can reduce stress and anxiety for an animal, ensuring firm footedness (or pawness). Rearranging furniture should be considered very carefully with an older dog, as it can cause stress and confusion in an animal that knows exactly where

(VOC) in paints. When using paints in your remodeling, find those with zero VOC. Paint emits off-gas (that terrible paint smell we have experienced) and continues to expend toxins for up to 18 months after application, affecting breathing. Keep your environment healthy by being aware of these and other toxins in cleaning, hygiene and beauty products.

Another way to bring Feng Shui to dogs of any age is to utilize the properties of the Water element. Feng Shui's Water element, represented in blue and black, augments digestion, allowing more time to relax. This makes a perfect color combination for food bowls and dining rooms, for instance. Providing a food dish for your dog that is black or blue will allow your pet



to slow down the eating process, especially helpful if your dog has a tendency to gulp down his/her food. Combine these colors with the Earth element's square shape to further assist in slower digestion. Avoid round food dishes (the Metal element) as this will cause your pet to eat more since circles will not allow our eyes to rest on one spot but your pet will continually search round and round for food. Keep in mind that water and food bowls should be elevated to make eating and drinking easier, especially for elderly animals. It is recommended that feeding and watering bowls be positioned about six inches below the pet's wither height (top of its front shoulder). For small dogs, subtract four inches. You can also find square and elevated food and water bowls for your pets that are aesthetically pleasing so they complement your existing decor.

Dogs also use other cues such as texture, brightness, and position to adapt to their environment. Experiment with various textures throughout your home and you may find more ways to make your furry friend comfortable.

By planning around your dogs habits and personality, and by applying the appropriate Feng Shui elements, you can achieve balance in the life of your pet and for everyone sharing your space. Using Feng Shui's principles and elements in your animal-friendly design can empower the spirit and environment not only for you, but also for your furry companion. 🐾

**Earthy colors meet feng shui criteria. Nest bed by
www.BigShrimpy.com, available at
Chow Baby, Hampden.**

